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SELF-CULTURE.



SELF-CULTURE:

A LECTURE TO YOUNG MEN.

BY

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SELF-CULTURE.

NEW-YORK, November 2d, 1863.

TO THE REV. FREDERICK G. CLARK :

DEAR SIR: The undersigned, in behalf of themselves and of many others who heard your Lecture to young men last evening, desire to express their thanks for it and their high appreciation of the views and principles which it contained.

Believing that its circulation would be serviceable, to young men especially, in the formation of Christian character, we respectfully solicit the manuscript for publication.

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N O T E .

THIS Lecture was originally prepared at the request of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association, and was delivered in Tremont Temple, Boston, on Sabbath Evening, April 15th, 1860 ; an occasion which is associated in the author's mind with a delightful Christian hospitality. - At the invitation of the New-York Young Men's Christian Association, the Lecture was repeated in the West Twenty-third street Presbyterian Church, New-York, on Sabbath evening, November 1st, 1863. The manuscript is now yielded to the press in accordance with the foregoing request, and in the humble hope that it will be of service in rousing our Christian young men to stir up the gift of God which is in them, and to make the most of themselves for the Church, for the Nation, and for God.

F. G. C.



SELF-CULTURE.

THE idea of *self* is either full of danger or full of duty, according to our conception of it.

The abused or perverted self is but an egotism of idolatry and selfishness. It is the ripe fruit of human depravity, the motive to every injustice, the symbol of all unfairness and oppression. This self is its own god; on its unhallowed altar the whole world is not too much to burn. What outrage, what cruelty, what heaven-provoking crime has not been committed under the low inspiration of serving self!

On the other hand, the true idea of self, with which alone we wish to deal, is quite another thing. This is a brief name for the entire estate which God has given us—God's acres in man's soul—bestowed upon each of us with this one condition and charge: "Occupy till I come." It is something to come in possession of a farm, whose improvement must depend upon our industry. Around the homestead are spread out, acres upon acres in extent, meadow and pasture, marsh, river, and wood. It is surely no sinecure to make the most of all these. But it is vastly more to be put in charge of one's own soul,

“to dress it and to keep it.” The trusteeship of intelligence, and sensibility, and volition—of all the risks and all the hopes of an immortal mind—this is incomparably the heaviest of all commissions.

But such is the self whose care and culture is now our study. It is that mysterious world of thought and feeling which is at once pent up and boundless. Its sphere is within the chambers of the brain; its outgoings, its visions, accept no boundaries. I speak of a gift which is no prerogative of kings or of scholars; it knows no distinction of caste; it is indifferent to wealth or poverty. It is the common heritage of man. Like the unfenced prairie, it touches the air and drinks the dew of heavenly contact, with nothing to come between.

I mean this conscious portraiture of Deity which I carry in my bosom; alas! how marred and strangely blurred, as by the stroke of some rude hand, yet still the image of God. Within the limits of this self what powers I discover, of desire, of responsibility, of love, of hate, of acquisition, and of God-like beneficence. What uprisings of impulse are here! What ambitions strike their roots within this bosom! And how deeply conscious is this soul of its Creator's care and respect! How lavish has He been in means of enriching and cultivating it!

This self is a gift which we all receive—a domain which we are bound to occupy. To fail of this is to incur the doom of the miserable man in the parable, who hid his talent in the earth: “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.”

It is after this interior wealth of character that St. Paul is reaching, when he charges his son Timothy to *stir up the gift of God which is in him*. He is feeling for the sinews of strength in the soul of his young disciple. He reminds him of his pious ancestry. He seeks to make him conscious of spiritual endowments which he received by the grace of God in connection with his ordination. These gifts and endowments he is to stir up. The figure is that of fire, whose dull embers are to be stirred together and blown into a flame. It is as if he had said, God has done much for you, son Timothy; search for that interior wealth of grace and mental gifts which He has hidden in your bosom; cultivate these; force them up to their highest development, and so make the most of yourself for your race and for your divine Master.

There is a splendid gift of God in every rational soul, however humble it may be. This gift includes all our endowments, whether spiritual or intellectual; whatever we find ourselves possessed of, which may be used for man's good or God's glory. This gift, this power of usefulness, this possibility of development, however latent at present, is our talent which we must improve, and at last return with usury.

Our subject thus takes the definite shape of *Self-Culture*, which is the life-work of every man. I desire to place this work more clearly before our minds, and then to consider some of the hindrances which we must overcome, as also the helps which we will need in successfully prosecuting the work.

To cultivate this self is to discover its wealth of soil and seed, and then to develop it. The history of every soul, not blighted in its growth, will show a time for germ and bud, and flower and fruit. What sun and shade, calm and storm, drouth and dew perform for nature, God accomplishes in the soul by the service of spiritual elements, no less varied or efficient. It is safe to assert that blossom and fruitage are the normal destiny of every soul. No tree is created to stand leafless and fruitless amidst surrounding life. It has some mission of utility, or of beauty. Its branches are to be the lodging-place of some birds; its foliage is to shelter some traveler from the August sun, or around its trunk the cattle are to gather and hold their dull communion. The least it can do will be to stand alive and green, filling the place in the landscape which it was designed to keep.

Not less than this, surely, can be the mission of every soul. It has, or ought to have, somewhere in its course, a time of fruit. It has its infancy, and youth, and maturity; and as surely as that God has created it, will he come, sooner or later, and demand the harvest.

Every one of us will answer, not only for the evil we do, but for the loss of every fruit which a fair husbandry would have yielded.

Such, then, is the self-culture which God has made our task. But the moment we address ourselves to it we encounter embarrassment. We are pressed by influences the most diverse and conflicting. Our

experience is a struggle between hindrances and helps. To study these is at once our wisdom and our safety. I am first to speak of

I. HINDRANCES TO SELF-CULTURE.

1. The first to be considered shall be nameless just now. We can afford to be generous in our argument, and to appeal to universal experience for the fact which we have now in hand. If possibly a skeptic hears me, I will forego theological dogmas and walk with him a moment in the shadow of his own doubts. I seek his admission of a fact which is as plain to his senses as to my own. I would have him observe the strange blight and mildew which are seen to fasten themselves upon all human endeavors. We may choose the soil, select the seed, avail ourselves of the best husbandry, but, alas! where do we find a perfect crop? Our greatest men and women—philosophers, moralists, poets, statesmen—what are they but strange contradictions, unaccountable disappointments, blighted promises? Grant that they had success. Yet, over against it, why must we record humiliation and failure in some aspects of their lives? Why can we nowhere find perfection? Why so seldom any thing approaching it? Why is human greatness so defective always, and our ideal manhood so unattainable, that a character like Washington's stands out in history, peerless in its symmetry and moral beauty?

The poet Wordsworth wrote not only his own experience but that of his race in those familiar lines :

“ We must needs confess
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires ;
And the most difficult of tasks to keep
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.
Man is dust : ethereal hopes are his,
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
Want due consistency, like a pillar of smoke,
That with majestic energy from earth
Rises, but, having reached the thinner air,
Melts and dissolves, and is no longer seen.”

Alas for the best of earth ! Mere nature, in her noblest conditions, and with her fairest opportunities, is almost sure to leave a record of falseness, vagrancy, disappointment, failure. What is the matter ? What worm gnaws at the root ? What is the secret of that great law of disappointment which sways human endeavor ? Shall I call its name ? It is a monosyllable—the least of words, but the most mighty of all destructive agencies—It is SIN !

2. Another hindrance to self-culture is IGNORANCE.

I use the term in its broadest sense, as indicating the clouds of mystery and uncertainty which seem to overhang all our beginnings. The phrenologists, in their daily advertisements, appeal to a universal instinct. They say : Let no man waste his life in experiments after the best avocation ; for we will

feel of his bumps and tell him in ten minutes what occupation he is fitted to fill. If all this were so, we should at once be rid of one of the greatest embarrassments in self-culture. The Bible asks the question: "Who can understand his errors?" And experience confirms the inference that the most difficult of all countries to explore is the region of our own soul. The mind looks out in the morning of its hopes and undertakings to find a fog all around. All is uncertain. We hardly know what we are, what we can do, ought to do, or where we shall begin. Indefiniteness, wonder, wishing, longing, hoping, groping, these are the steps up which we climb to all our successes.

Impatience can not burst the door which time and patience are to unlock. How often have we said to ourselves: What am I? What my powers? capabilities? my mission? destiny? What shall I make of the mystery of self and its surroundings? Could I but lift this veil! Could I see but a little way in this fog! Could I only know what enterprises and endeavors might succeed, and what would only prove a waste of life! Would some messenger of fate but touch my shoulder and whisper, "This is your way: success, usefulness, happiness, lie in this path!"

But no. No answer reaches us out of the mystery of our future. The impenetrable veil of ignorance and uncertainty moves as we move, and ever hangs before our sight. Greatness and obscurity, power and imbecility, are alike helpless in the cra-

dle. He who to-day measures the heavenly distances, and walks in the thoroughfares of science among the stars, once sat at his bench in school biting his pencil over his first puzzle in arithmetic. The engineer who levels mountains and lifts the valley, making a highway for nations where once only the wild goat passed, can remember the time when, ignorant of his genius and mission, he first traced an angle or a curve.

The orator who holds the multitude spell-bound in the grasp of his eloquence once uttered his faltering declamation or recited his "You'd scarce expect one of my age," with shaking knees, upon the school-master's platform. And so we all, whatever we undertake, aspire to, struggle for, must enter upon our life-work, doubting, feeling about in the dark, experimenting we know not how long, until experience shall dissipate the fogs of ignorance which mantle all our beginnings.

3. And now we reach a third great embarrassment, (as at the time we judge it,) to our self-culture. If you please, for convenience, we will call it **HARDSHIP**.

Who has not wondered in tracing the history of human success? The way to eminence, be it literary, political, religious, philanthropic—what a rugged path it is! How beset it is with chasms, morasses, deep streams, and jungles! The world never makes a greater blunder than when it writes the path of genius a painless one. The superficial think

genius an express-train to success, in which the illustrious did but take their seat, with a through-ticket in their pocket. But they who have observed more carefully have learned that genius is only the *power of work*. Did we picture it, we should see a strong form, with muscle, and nerve, and burning eye. Behold him grappling with the difficulties of the way; his progress is oftentimes a dead climb up steepes which other men dare not attempt. See him grasp rocks, twigs, roots; see where he puts his foot; see the strain of all the man, and the fiery purpose of his soul to overcome the hardships of his lot, and to conquer success by the sheer power of effort.

It is due to truth just here that we reverse this dark cloud of hardship, and see the light of its other side. Doing this we must observe that difficulties and oppositions are often only *seeming* hindrances. Is it not a marvel that man, the greatest of creatures, must begin his existence in the most complete weakness and dependence? The horse receives perfection of muscle and movement as a birthright. He comes at once to his highest success by mere brute instinct. But what will man attain to by the aid of only natural development? What does he know but by attention, imitation, and study? What can you make of him, as it respects real nerve and power, until he has been jostled from the cradle of ease by some rudeness?

Hardship is, by the verdict of experience, the real regimen of successful effort. But we seldom recognize its beneficent mission until we gather its au-

tumn fruits. Hardship is at once the cost and the birth-pang of that which earth and heaven value. So much is this the case, that we might almost venture to graduate successes by their cost. A wild rose will grow anywhere; it needs no culture, no care. The country is full of such flowers. But what is the wild rose? Pluck it, smell it, look at it. It is poor, thin, colorless, odorless; it costs nothing, it is worth nothing. But you hand me now an exquisite rose-bud. What fragrance, what richness of color, what matchless beauty! Where did you get it? Tell me its history. It is one of a hundred seedlings which struck root in your conservatory. The gardener planted them, watered and watched them, defended them from many an onset of insect marauders, and out of the hundred he rejected ninety and nine as common and comparatively worthless. This one rose, then, is the result of skill, time, and painstaking. And we have heard of a gardener's putting a choice plant away in the dark, starving it of all light and cheerfulness, until every leaf fell off, and it seemed about to die. And all this was only that afterward, when the light was admitted, this severe handling might result in bringing forth a blossom of such rare, deep coloring, as could come only from those dark days. So everywhere in human experience, and frequently in nature, hardship is the vestibule of the highest success.

That magnificent oak was detained twenty years, perhaps, in its upward growth, in order that its root

might creep around the boulder; and thus the tree was anchored, so as to defy the storms of centuries. I see a pearl upon your bosom. What is it? It is the result of suffering in the oyster. It is nature's compensation for some wound or disease. Or I see a man—he is a pearl among men. Shall I tell you his history? He is born not only of flesh and blood, but of crosses and disappointments. It has been pithily said of the Third Napoleon, that “he went by St. Helena to the Tuileries.” The hardships of his house prepared the way for his triumphs. And we, wherever we climb, *must make hardships our stepping-stones.*

4. Self-culture has also to combat with MORBID EXPERIENCE.

I will call this the swamp-land of the soul. You will find it everywhere. And over this swamp a mist is hovering which hides the mire in which we sink. I will ask a hundred persons, Were you ever morbid? And, possibly, all will answer, No. But I will watch their mental movements; I will scan the lights and shades which checker their experience, until, by and by, it is a chance if I do not convict them all of morbid feeling.

I passed my boyhood within sight of “Saddle Back,” a spur of the Green Mountains. As seen from the village, it seemed one dry, solid rock. I climbed it once. As I went up I thought to find a sunny ridge, from which I should see the kingdoms of the world at my feet. But on reaching the top,

I had gone but a little way, before I was lost in a morass, where the stunted trees seemed tottering with malaria, and not an element of cheerfulness or beauty redeemed the scene.

Such are the mountain-tops of human greatness. Great men, like great mountains, have their swamp-land. The Country Parson has a chapter in one of his volumes "*Concerning Screws*," or damaged horses; and his position is, that all men are screws in some sense. "There is something truly fearful," he remarks, "when we find that clearest-headed and soberest-hearted of men, the great Bishop Butler, telling us that all his life long he was struggling with horrible morbid suggestions, (devilish is what he calls them,) which, but for being constantly held in check with the severest effort of his nature, would have driven him mad. You who know your own horse, know that you dare not trot him hard downhill. And you who know your own mind and heart, know that there are some things of which you dare not think—thoughts on which your only safety is resolutely to turn your back."

Probably most persons are, at some times, morbid in some things. The eyes are green, the spirits are depressed; every thing is sombre, suspicious, hostile. I will show you this mental disease in that college student, who is not seen on the play-ground, but prefers to pass his leisure in wandering alone by the brook and in the grove. He is fascinated by the curious calm of his own thoughts and by the sickly refinement of his isolated experience. He is in

great danger, but does not know it. Very likely all his trouble is physical, and may be resolved into too much veal, hot bread, and coffee. But he is spell-bound, and, as he wanders in his own poor company, he may count himself fortunate if he does not meet the devil of Melancholy, who will leave a mark on him for life.

What is Melancholy? It is a fallen angel, bringing in its fall some strange counterfeits of heaven. It wraps itself in gentleness, and solitude, and sickly love, and thus eats up the spirit's joy. There is a strange mixture of pain and pleasure in its stealthy working. It breaks friendship with the world, which seems, in all its diversity of toil and passion, to be only and always false. Its morbid vision sees what is not to be seen—offense, slight, and wrong, where none were meant. Behind the sombre curtains of the soul, all outward beauty grows shaded and deformed. The sky is not blue, the earth is not green, flowers are not beautiful nor fragrant; music is always minor, and dull at that. Birds, beasts, insects, seem wicked, because they persist in being happy. Bells always strike knells, and never chimes. The soul is drowned in sorrows, and yet can not be sure that they are any sorrows at all. Such was Henry Kirke White, who sang out his woes in strains which morbid minds revel in :

“ But though impressions calm and sad
Thrill round my heart a holy heat,
And I am inly glad,

The tear-drop stands in either eye,
And yet I can not tell thee why
I'm pleased, and yet I'm sad."

Experiences like these may come from temperament, or from disease, or from misfortune. But from whatever source, this typhoid condition of the soul is most dangerous, and directly opposed to earnest endeavors and to real successes in self-culture.

These are a few of the hindrances and struggles which will beset us in our effort to develop and make the most of the gift of God within us.

II. HELPS TO SELF-CULTURE.

We turn now to notice our helps and encouragements in this work of self-culture.

1. Of course we place RELIGION in advance of all.

There is a power—and he who never felt it has yet seen it—there is a power which can grapple with the mysterious evils of our experience. It can reveal to us at once our disease and the remedy. This is God's specific for our ruined nature. It brings just the force we need, and sets that force at work upon the ruin within.

That man works at an enormous disadvantage who attempts to develop the powers of his soul without the influence of the Bible; or, more exactly, without the specific grace of the Gospel. Poor hu

man nature! I see it toiling, lifting, straining, failing—not understanding the philosophy, not to say the religion of those words: “Without me ye can do nothing.” It is like trying to master a science when we lack the book of rudiments, and have no formulæ by which to work out the problem. He who begins the work of self-culture with the perfection of human nature as his first axiom will never solve his problem, for he starts with a false proposition. It is only something from without and from above which can really light up our whole interior, penetrating every avenue and chamber with its health-giving illumination. This power alone can climb in under fallen arches and amidst splendid ruins, and, being there, is competent to repair, replace, reconsecrate the dishonored temple of man’s soul. The business of this power within us is to penetrate the soul’s heavy eyelids, to open its deaf ear, to tear off the cerements which enshroud the spirit.

Christianity furnishes precisely the argument and the motive-power for the work of self-culture. It would be difficult to exaggerate *the educating influences of the Gospel*. Do you ask: How can I make the most of myself—of body, of mind, of imagination, of whatever powers God has given me? I answer without hesitation: Go to school to the religion of the Bible. It is no dogmatism to assert that there is not in the entire range of science, of education, of discipline, any thing to be found that will so take hold on human nature, so grasp the character—its weakness, deformity, and disorganization—

and bring it together, part to its part, and power smoothly fitting into power, and build it up until the man shall, as it were, outgrow himself, and be a miracle to himself and to others, as the power which resides in a divine revelation. . .

This influence, moreover, is the best cure for morbid experiences. Tell me not what Kirke White, or Cowper, or Payson were in their shaded piety, as if their darkness (as some imagine) were due to their religion; rather tell me what they had been *without it*. There is many a chasm over which the train of our experience must pass; and many a time would the bridge of mere human resolve crush down, were it not held up by the strong arches and piers of religion.

And were there time, what a history might we recite of misdirected men of genius, of gigantic intellects perverted and wrecked—brilliant stars “lost in the blackness of darkness forever.” And all this for want of the stimulus, the safeguards, the protecting power of the influence which we commend. Religion would have fixed them in their orbit, and would have controlled their movements, so that their lives would have been as useful as they were illustrious. . But, alas! the want of this educating power was a defect which nothing else could supply.

2. A legitimate SELF-APPRECIATION is indispensable to self-culture.

This is at the farthest remove from conceit, which spoils any man. It is essential to real success in life

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that we appreciate our life-problem. In this we have certain elements and quantities given, and with them a result to reach. Self-respect, in its highest sense, lies at the foundation of healthful development. It is important to convince every mind that it is sublime in its conscious being; that to-day, its aspects may be rough and unpromising, but not more so than once was every uncut diamond. A proper self-appreciation forbids the affectation or the morbid feeling which says: "I am nothing, I can do nothing; I have no talent, influence, or power." But, on the other hand, it counts up its gifts of mind, noting their weight and their superscription, like golden coin. It values whatever it possesses—emotions, suggestions, convictions; these are its legacy. Conscience is the telegraph, reporting back and forth between itself and eternity.

Opinions are the highest forms of property, and better worth a struggle than the purse. Opinions are the best and most lasting growth of earth's soil. Beneath divine sovereignty, ideas come nearest to omnipotence. Ideas are giving shape to the world. They stretch a magic wand over rude acres, where once were seen only rocks, and hovels, and goats, and transform the scene into a "Central Park;" and all this beauty is but the signature of a single mind upon the face of nature. Ideas shape men. I would plant ideas as confidently as corn. Men, as organized in families and in nations, are but the growth of ideas which have been planted in the earth. If

we search for it, we can find the seed-thought out of which empires, monarchies, republics have sprouted.

From this I learn that I must appreciate the soil of my own soul, since I know not what precious germ of thought God's hand may bury there. I may not despise my own individuality, nor suppress the growth of ideas and opinions which I find springing up in my bosom. There was a time when the science of astronomy was an opinion in the mind of Galileo, and it was demanded of him that he should strangle it there. There was a time when the mind of Luther, in his cloister, was a crucible, in which was going on in miniature, that process of discovery and of faith which afterward convulsed all Europe in the wars of the Reformation. The time was when Wilberforce, the philanthropist, and a few others, carried in their minds the germ of that great movement in behalf of an oppressed race, which makes one of the brightest pages of British history. A normal self-appreciation, then, demands not only the life but the growth of individual convictions. And yet we must remember that, while opinions have their right and their responsibility, they have also their cost. Let no man covet the luxury of private opinions or of fixed principles who grudges their price. Wilberforce was once broaching his benevolent schemes to a nobleman; the listener heard him through, and answered by pointing to a picture of the Crucifixion, saying: "That is what reformers come to!" It was a great fact; in some sense as true to-day as ever. Yet, whoever would

be sure of the best self-culture must consider that his principles are his own and God's best investment in his being. If he suppress his individuality he extinguishes his mental life and dries up all the juices of his soul. While he whose life propounds or illustrates one true principle has not lived in vain.

3. Closely akin to this quality of self-appreciation is that of COURAGE.

This, too, is essential to self-culture. The root of the word is "Cœur," heart, soul. It is not mere physical instinct. It is not the spirit of an Arnold, of whom it was said that he was brave in proportion as he was without thought. Courage is rather that deep conviction, or that solid purpose, which gathers strength by delay. We are told that icebergs in the Polar seas are seen moving northward, sometimes in the face of strong tides and winds setting toward the south. This movement is explained by the fact of deep under-currents running at the base of the ice-mountain, and moving with irresistible power. So the real courage of the soul is a power which stems and goes counter to superficial tides. It is a principle of self-propulsion, moving in the direction of reason, and conscience, and heart. It is that rare power of the soul which is able to say of a proposed undertaking, or of a contested position: "It may be difficult, it may be costly, or it may be odd, *but it is right*, and, God helping, I dare to do it." One of the greatest tests of courage is to dare to be one's

self—to stand in one's own true position, accepting one's own personality, addressing one's self to his own responsibilities—envying none, imitating none. Whatever any of us accomplish must be done in spite of shadows, floating like clouds over us. To-day we are shaded by the great reputation of men whose profession we choose; to-morrow by the shadows of our superiors in mental or moral qualities; then comes the shadow of conventionalism, or fashion, whose motto is: "Do, forbear, or suffer any thing rather than be odd." We next find the shadow of morbid self-depreciation, and then of constitutional diffidence. But true courage, working in the paths of self-culture, must be indifferent to all these shadows, intent only upon doing its work and fulfilling its mission.

4. One more item must be mentioned among our helps to self-culture; it is PATIENCE.

It is the principle which says, in every honest pursuit: "I bide my time." Patience is faith in truth, in effort, in great laws leading on to success. It is the principle which the sapling oak unconsciously illustrates as it grows side by side with the sunflower. The ephemeral plant will out-top it, stretching out its great arms in derision, laughing with its big round face at the slow creeping oak; but that oak will attend the funeral of many generations of sun-flowers, drawing its very life from the loam which constitutes their grave. Patience with ourselves, patience with others, patience with divine

providence, this is the secret of success. Patience lives in the conviction that truth and right are strong, and will yet have their day. It is no less sure that wrong is weak, and that, however strong to-day, its power and light will go out in utter darkness by and by. It remembers the old story of Bessus and the birds' nests. He was seen one day by his neighbors pulling down some nests that were built near his room. He gave as a reason for this conduct that "the voice of the birds was insupportable, as they never ceased twitting him of the murder of his father;" a crime which had been concealed for many years, of which he had never been suspected, and which would probably have been a secret till the Judgment had not the confession been wrung from him by the ministry of birds, whose innocence and mutual care stirred in his breast the avenging fires of remorse.

"Thus doth sensitive conscience quicken thought,
Lending reproachful voices to a breeze,
Keen lightning to a look."

If we can only be patient we shall come to our own growth, and we shall see the full growth of right around us. Difficulties will disappear, and mysteries will solve themselves; the right will triumph, and we shall find that

“It ever is weak falsehood’s destiny ;
That her thick mask turns crystal, to let through
The unsuspecting eyes of honesty.”

Patience is the greatest of virtues, and often it serves as the Indian summer, which ripens the tardy harvests of other qualities. Whatever we do, or possess, we can not dispense with patience. In our interior self-culture we may plough, harrow, and sow ; but if we can not wait we shall never use the sickle. This is the hardest of lessons always. The mill of God grinds too slowly for us all. We know not how to wait the “due time” of Providence in the great issues and interests of the world ; but the hardest task of patience is to accept God’s way and to wait God’s time in our own souls.

I trust we have at least reached some fair appreciation of the importance of our theme, whatever may be thought of the discussion.

It would be curious, and yet sad, to estimate how much of real manhood, what proportion of the best forces of our nature is held in check and lost in the real results of life, through failure in this direction. How many a sapling in moral power might grow to the stature of an oak under the stimulus of a legitimate self-culture. There is many a tree which stands half dead upon the lawn, bark-bound, and ready to burst with its pent-up vitality, which wants but a few gashes of the gardener’s knife to relieve its plethora and bring it to perfection.

So the world is full of men bark-bound, undeveloped, timid, unconscious of their power, to whom a real self-development would be the best of boons, as also a real increase of the world's moral wealth.

Let every one remember, then, that he is a growth, and not a thing. We owe it to ourselves, to our country, to our God, that we make the most and the best of the talents committed to us. We are fairly warned that God will call for the usury of the one talent as well as of the five; and our encouragement is all-sufficient in the assurance that every real tree of righteousness, however small, if duly cultured, shall bud and blossom in due time, and, at last, drop its fruit in Paradise.

Our subject could never be untimely; it is specially pertinent now, since never was the world in greater need of men—real, living men—with souls within them to guide their feet and move their hands. O ye young men! who are but half awake to your responsibilities, gird yourselves to your work. Will you muse life away? Is it a time to sleep when the whole earth is rocked and shaken by great issues, in which you have a part? And you, *Christian* young men, who have no place in God's vineyard, whose names are not on the roll-book of earnest workers for Christ, will you not repent of your inaction, and now throw yourselves into the work to which God's grace has called you? The vows of God are on you! Can you longer play with shadows when such tremendous interests are calling you to awake? Be advised to live in earnest, and to

fill up what remains of life with hard work for your Master! Go quickly to the vineyard, and as you go, recite to yourselves the stirring words of the poet :

“I have done at length with dreaming; henceforth, O thou
soul of mine,
Thou must take up sword and gauntlet, waging warfare most
divine.
Life is struggle, combat, victory! wherefore have I slumber-
ed on,
With my forces all unmarshaled, with my weapons all un-
drawn?
Oh! how many a glorious record had the angels of me kept
Had I done instead of doubted—had I warred instead of
wept!
Yet my soul, look not behind thee! thou hast work to do at
last;
Let the brave toil of the present overarch the crumbled past!
Build thy great acts high and higher, build them on the con-
quered sod,
Where thy weakness first fell bleeding, and thy first prayer
rose to God.”

THE
Young Men's Christian Association
OF NEW-YORK.

FOUNDED 1852.

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MONTHLY MEETINGS.

The Stated Monthly Meetings of the Association are held on the Fourth Monday Evening of each month, at the Rooms of the Association.

The Stated Monthly Meetings of the Board of Managers are held on the Second Wednesday Evening of each month, at the Rooms.

The Regular Prayer Meeting of the Association, every Thursday Evening, at the Rooms.

Members changing their residences will please notify the Recording Secretary, R. R. McBURNEY, at the Rooms.

ALL YOUNG MEN, especially **STRANGERS**, are cordially invited to visit the Rooms, and attend the meetings of the Association.

Donations of Funds for the Association, or Books for the Library, addressed to Verranus Morse, M.D., Treasurer, will be gratefully received at the Rooms.

All Communications in regard to the Association should be addressed to

CHARLES E. WHITEHEAD,

Corresponding Secretary,

50 WALL STREET.

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